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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 000188

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SUBJECT: SECURITY FORCES RAID PURPORTED XINJIANG TERRORIST
CAMP

Classified By: Political Internal Unit Chief Susan Thornton. Reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) Local Xinjiang security forces raided a suspected terrorist camp in a mountainous region of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region near the Pakistan border on January 5, killing 18 and arresting 17 suspects, according to Chinese media and officials. According to Xinjiang public security officials, who held a press conference about the incident on January 8, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) ran the training camp. Sources in Xinjiang and Beijing declined to comment on the operation beyond what was in the media and the MFA spokesperson shed no additional light on the event at the regular press briefing on January 9. Xinjiang-based media and websites did not cover the event, which was front page news in Beijing. Media accounts of the operation played up the scale of the operation, which China Daily called "one of the largest anti-separatist operations in recent years," and noted seizures of explosives and the death of one police officer in the exchanges of fire. End summary.

Xinjiang Police Raid ETIM Training Camp

2. (SBU) Xinjiang public security officials announced that they had raided a suspected terrorist camp in a mountainous region of Xinjiang Autonomous Region near the Pakistan border on January 5, killing 18 and arresting 17 suspects. Xinjiang police are pursuing several suspects who managed to escape the raid, according to reports, but there was no further information on whether the action involved security authorities from other countries in the region. Xinjiang Public Security Bureau (PSB) spokesperson Ba Yan stated that one police officer was killed and one wounded in the action. Police confiscated 22 homemade grenades and more than 1500 semi-finished grenades. According to Ba, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) ran the camp, located in the Pamir Mountain range, where Xinjiang borders Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Ba noted in her comments that ETIM was officially designated a terrorist organization by the UN on September 11, 2002. All those killed in Friday's raid were members of ETIM, Ba claimed.

3. (SBU) Another Xinjiang PSB spokesperson Song Hongli said ETIM dispatched "backbone" elements of its organization into China to set up the terrorist training camps, but did not give any other details of about the group's origins or activities. Ba described the raid as "one of the largest anti-separatist, anti-

terrorist operations in recent years." Ba also noted that ETIM operated several mines near the training camp in order to raise funds for its activities.

Ministry Confirms Reports, No Additional Details

¶4. (C) Embassy contacts in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region Foreign Affairs Office and in the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) in Beijing confirmed the public accounts of the incident, but would not reveal any additional information. MPS officials told the RSO that Xinjiang authorities had been working to crack down on terrorists and said that Beijing hoped to get more information on the incident.

¶5. (SBU) Speaking at the World Law Conference on January 8 in Beijing, MPS Anti-Terrorism Department Deputy-Director General Zhao Yongchen was quoted as stating that ETIM "remains the greatest terrorist threat that China faces." In the last ten years, he said, China's terrorist threat has mainly come from "East Turkestan" terrorist forces and organizations both at home and abroad. According to MPS statistics, Xinjiang "terrorists, splittists and extremists" have carried out more than 260 acts of terrorism in China and abroad, resulting in 160 deaths and over 440 wounded.

Propaganda Efforts Tout Unity

¶6. (C) Although the raid was front page news in popular Beijing tabloids on January 9, media and

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websites in Xinjiang did not run coverage of the story and the transcript of the January 8 press conference appeared to be unavailable. One remaining link to the story on the Xinjiang-based tianshan web site could not be opened.

¶7. (C) Netizens' comments on the raid, as pointed out in the English-language China Daily article on the story, were uniformly supportive of the police action, reflecting a disciplined effort by censors to maintain the appearance of national unity. Many comments lauded the sacrifice the fallen police officer had made for the sake of the safeguarding the motherland and encouraged security forces to continue rooting out and killing terrorists. One comment questioned the necessity of stressing that ETIM had been designated by the UN, claiming that China has the right to strike any terrorists regardless of international sanction. Another encourage the United States to take a page from the book of Chinese security forces in fighting terrorists, claiming that the U.S. methods are too "hesitant."

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